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No. 52.

THE

NATURE AND IMPORTANCE

OF

REPENTANCE.

Ye must be born again.—*John* iii. 7.

PUBLISHED BY THE

BAPTIST GENERAL TRACT SOCIETY,

NO. 36, NORTH FIFTH STREET,

PHILADELPHIA.

BT 200 .N36

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There are those to be found in the world who ca
treat the great subject of repentance on account of si
with contempt, and can reckon the man who is peni
tent on account of his transgressions before God a
little better than a madman. But who are thes
persons? Not they who have considered the greatnes
of God, and feel that he has a right to govern us; wh
know that his law is holy, and that to violate it is t
incur the curse of God, and to plunge ourselves into
misery; not they who have studied the inspired vo-
lume, and desired an interest in its blessings. Those
who can look without deep interest and holy delight
on a penitent transgressor, are themselves enemies to
God, the slaves of Satan, and travellers to eternal wo,
even though they may be boasting of their happiness
and liberty. Holy angels and the spirits who sur-
round the throne of God "rejoice over one sinner that
repenteth," even though he may be among the poorest
and the most despised of the human race.

The following sketch relates to a penitent.—Charles
Goldsmith was a young man who had been educated
in what some persons would call a superior manner.
I confess, however, my entire disapprobation of every
system of education which excludes the knowledge
which is needful for the salvation of the soul. Of
this, alas! when very young he knew nothing. It
cannot, then, be a matter of surprise that he went on
in thoughtlessness, folly, and sin. His pursuits and
his pleasures only related to the present world, and
he was equally ignorant and careless in reference to
another. He had lost his father, and had followed
to the grave several of his companions, but even these
affecting instances of mortality produced nothing more
than merely passing impressions. I had once or twice
been thrown into the company of this young man, but
failed in every attempt to introduce serious conver-
sation.

One day he called, saying he wished to consult me
on a matter of very great importance. I encouraged

[Concluded on the 3d page.

No. 52.

THE NATURE AND IMPORTANCE OF

REPENTANCE.

The nature

Repentance supposes sin committed against God. Where there is no sin, there is no place for Repentance, nor can there be any need of it. Were men righteous, innocent, and holy, it would be improper to call them to Repentance. Could any individual of the human race be found, who in every period of his life had loved the Lord his God with all his heart, with all his mind, and with all his strength, and his neighbour as himself, that man would have no need to concern himself about Repentance. Of what should he repent whose heart and life have always been perfectly right? It is sin, and sin only that makes Repentance necessary. And since among all the descendants of Adam, there is none righteous, no, not one; since all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, Repentance is necessary for all; so necessary, that without it they must inevitably perish.

It is not in the power of apostate man to produce Repentance in himself. It is the gift of God. He only that made our souls can renew them again to Repentance. When he grants this precious and saving gift, whether to *Jews* or *Gentiles*, it is an instance of his powerful, as well as of his free grace. It is not bestowed on account of any previous inclination, will, or deed in him on whom it is conferred. It is by the grace of God that a man becomes a repenting and pardoned sinner. Without that grace, he would have continued in his hardness, his pride, and his enmity to God. It is the sinner himself that repents; but it is the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ which gives him a heart to do it. By this grace the stony heart is taken away, and a heart of flesh given, according to the divine promise, Ezek. xxxvi. 26.

Repentance, as it is needful for all, and should be preached to every creature, so it is bestowed on sinners of all ranks and degrees. To the young and the aged, the high and the low, the rich and the poor, the learned and the unlearned, God hath granted, in instances which

cannot be numbered, Repentance unto life. There is no one so far from God, but *his* power can bring him nigh; no case so desperate, but the grace of the gospel can reach it. Our Lord Jesus Christ and his apostles in their ministrations, called sinners of every kind to Repentance.

Repentance in general is *a change of the mind from evil to good, with a correspondent change of conduct.*

Some imagine, that a degree of devotional humiliation before a man leaves this world, is all that is intended by Repentance. After a life spent in ignorance, impiety, and profaneness, they suppose all will be set to rights between their offended Maker and themselves, by what they can easily do when they apprehend that death is near. Thus they presume to go on in sin, quieting their consciences with the delusive hope of making their peace with God by a death-bed Repentance. This appears not only to imply a mistaken conception of the nature of Repentance, but to be one of those dangerous snares of the devil, by which unwary souls are taken captive by him at his will, and led blindfold to certain destruction.

Others imagine that Repentance consists only in reformation of life. This is a partial and erroneous view of the subject. It is true, without reformation of life there can be no proof of a man's Repentance being sincere; but the life may be much reformed where the heart is not renewed by the power of saving grace.—Repentance consists,

1. In a change of mind respecting sin. Sin is the transgression of the holy law of God. It is this law which shows us what is right and what is wrong; which requires of us entire subjection to our Maker's will; and which forbids, exposes, and condemns every thing of a contrary nature. He, therefore, who understands the true nature of sin, must be acquainted with the extent and purity of that law against which it is committed. The Apostle Paul tells us, he had not known sin but by the law; for by the law is the knowledge of sin. But one part of the misery of impenitent sinners lies in their having no proper conceptions of that divine rule. As they are ignorant of God's righteousness and holiness, they are equally so respecting the purity and spirituality of his law.

But in Repentance the mind is turned from darkness

to light. By the teachings of the blessed Spirit of God, the extent of the law is discerned, as reaching not only to the outward actions of life, but to the thoughts, motions, and intentions of the heart, condemning every evil thought and inclination. Then the commandment comes home to the conscience with convincing light and power, so that the penitent discovers a thousand things to be sinful in the sight of God, in which before he thought there was no kind of harm. His multiplied transgressions of heart and life start up to view; sin revives in his conscience, in all its hideous forms, with dreadful accusations of guilt, and a sense that he deserves the divine wrath. The law of God is now beheld in its true nature, as holy, just, and good. The sinner's views of it are quite changed. He sees that its requisitions are equitable and reasonable, when it calls upon him to love the Lord his God with all his heart, with all his mind, and with all his strength, and to love his neighbour as himself.

Hence arises a conviction of the real evil there is in sin; that the just wages of it is death; that the worst of punishments is due to the sinner, for his multiplied transgressions; and that there would be no unrighteousness in God, should he execute the awful sentence of his law upon him. Thus sin, by the commandment, becomes, or appears, exceeding sinful, unreasonable, and injurious.

The penitent now feels that there is in sin injustice, ingratitude, and rebellion; that it implies contempt of God, enmity against him, and opposition to his throne, to his government, and even to his very existence. If a child offer an insult to his earthly parent, his conduct is much more base than such treatment to a stranger. The more wise, the more indulgent the parent, the more unnatural, the more hateful is the ingratitude of the child. If the offence be committed without provocation; if it be committed against innumerable instances of kindness, the guilt of it is attended with greater aggravations. Carry this train of reasoning forward.—Apply it to offences, to millions and millions of provocations, committed by dependent creatures against their rightful Owner, their supreme Lord, the Author of their existence, the Bestower of all the good things they have enjoyed; who is a God of infinite purity, of unbounded wisdom, and unequalled goodness; and you will be utterly

at a loss to determine how atrocious such offences are, or what punishment such criminals deserve. In such a light the penitent sinner views his transgressions. "Against Thee, thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight." To thee the affront is given; thou, O God, art the party wronged by my perfidious conduct. It is thy truth which I have denied; thy government which I have despised; thy commands which I have disobeyed; and thy threatenings which I have disregarded; it is thy name which I have dishonoured: it is with thee that I have dealt deceitfully and disingenuously all my life.

The particular aggravations of sin are recollected by the penitent.—Thus he makes his humble acknowledgments before his Maker and his Judge: "I have sinned long; many years have I rebelled against thee. I have sinned deliberately, and with the full consent of all the powers which thou hast given me. I have broken through the strongest ties, and repeatedly violated my own purposes and resolutions. I have sinned against the clearest conviction, against light and knowledge. I have sinned against mercies, and against judgments; against the warnings and reproofs of men, and against the chastisements of an angry God. I have drawn others into sin along with myself, and been the instrument of leading many into the ways of perdition. O what have I done!"

This sense of sin is not superficial. It is deep; it affects the heart and the mind. It loads the conscience, and oppresses the soul. It makes the sinner cry out with great energy, "Wo is me, I am a man of unclean lips, and of impure hands! Mine iniquity is gone over my head; as a heavy burden, it is too heavy for me to bear."

This view of sin is not transient, but abiding. It is not like that of Pharaoh, who, while some heavy judgment lay upon him, was conscious of the evil he had done, and repeatedly acknowledged that he had sinned; but when the calamity was removed, his former hardness of heart returned. It is not like that of Ahab, who, for a short time humbled himself before God. Simon Magus had a transient sight of his sin, and made confession of it; yet he sorrowed not to Repentance. But with the true penitent, a sense of the evil of sin is abiding. His sin is ever before him; for his mind and heart are now effectually changed with respect to it. It is not with him as

with many whom God has visited with bodily affliction, and who are apprehensive that their end is near. They seem for the time much alarmed, and deeply conscious of the evil they have done; but no sooner are their fears of approaching death removed, and their health restored, than they return as the dog to his vomit, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.

Farther, This change of mind respecting sin, puts the man on earnest inquiries after deliverance from it. His conscience is now awake to a sense of his danger. Like the hearers of Peter on the day of Pentecost, he is pricked to the heart, and with all the eagerness of a man deeply apprehensive of his being in a miserable and perishing condition, he exclaims, "Men and brethren, what shall I do?" Or, with the Philippian jailor, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" Is there any relief, any way of escape, any hope of mercy for such a one as I am? What course shall I take? To whom shall I flee?—In this distress, he is led to the throne of grace. Behold, he prayeth! Not with unmeaning formality; but with the energy of the disciples in the storm, "Lord, save us, we perish." His very breath is now the breath of prayer. In the house and by the way, at home and abroad, his soul ascends to God, with earnest cries for pardon and salvation. In his retired moments, and in theacts of public devotion, he comes before God, not with the language of the Pharisee, "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are—I fast—I pay tythes—I give alms;" but with the self-convicted publican, he smites upon his breast and cries, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner! Or, like the royal penitent of old, "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving-kindness: according to the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. O wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin." The Lord has said, that sinners shall return to him with weeping, and be led with supplication. When the prodigal came to himself, that is, when his mind was changed, and he became a true penitent, what was the course on which he resolved? I will arise, said he, and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.—Confession of sin is

the penitent's proper language. His full heart gives vent to itself this way. He cannot, he will not hide his sin before his Maker. He acknowledges it freely, fully, and without reserve. He accuses and condemns himself, and freely owns his deserts. "While I kept silence, says the psalmist, my bones waxed old, through my roaring all the day. I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid."

This sense of sin covers a man with shame and confusion of face. Self-approbation is now turned into self-loathing; self-admiration into self-abhorence. The language of Job is now adopted, as most suitable to the sinner's case, "Behold, I am vile! I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." Thus the prediction is accomplished, Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loath yourselves in your own sight, for your iniquities, and for your abominations. Thus penitent Ephraim was ashamed and confounded because he did bear the reproach of his youth. And Paul reminds the converts at Rome, that they were now ashamed of those things which they had formerly practised: "What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed?"

2. Repentance consists in genuine sorrow for sin, connected with faith in the divine Redeemer and hope of mercy through him. Without some measure of faith and hope, we apprehend, the heart of a sinner is never truly humbled. The general inducement to Repentance urged by Christ and his apostles was, The kingdom of heaven is at hand; repent and believe the gospel. Hope of divine mercy softens the heart, subdues the stubborn soul, and serves to break the chains of sin.

That man cannot be in a safe state whose Repentance arises merely from an apprehension of his being in a lost condition; and who is a total stranger to the faith and hope of the gospel. Judas is said to have repented, but he was so far from having any hope of pardon, that, in deep and black despair, he put a period to his own life. We see no appearance of true penitence in Cain. Full of horror and distraction, he cried out, "My punishment is greater than I can bear;" and he fled from the presence of the Lord. Despair drives a man from his Mak-

er; but Repentance brings him near. The terrors of God may fill the conscience with dread, but his loving-kindness draws the repenting sinner to himself. I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee. Repentance unto salvation is clearly described in that remarkable portion of God's word, Zech. xii. 10, "I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace, and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one that mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first born." Our sins were the cause of the Redeemer's death. They were the grief of his soul. He was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities. And they whose Repentance is according to the gospel, look upon Christ as pierced for their sakes, and dying for their offences. The effect of this look is mourning; for in true Repentance there is genuine sorrow and grief of heart for sin itself. Thus says the Psalmist, "I will be sorry for my sin:" for the sin which I have committed against a God of infinite mercy and goodness; for the sin which has provoked him, which has vexed his Holy Spirit, and grieved him at his heart.

The penitent mourns for sin in its root as well as its branches; for the impurity of his nature, as well as the iniquities of his life. The language of a repenting sinner is, Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin, did my mother conceive me. I am throughout as an unclean thing. My very heart is vile, deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. When I would do good, evil is present with me. O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death? Surely, there never existed on the face of the earth, so vile, so polluted a wretch as I am. And is there still mercy for one so unworthy, so sinful? The hope of it overwhelms, at the same time that it relieves my soul.

This sorrow for sin, of which we speak, is sincere and hearty. The heart is broken. The man is of a contrite spirit, and trembles at the divine word. He sinks into deep humiliation before God. He owns himself the chief of sinners, and unworthy of the least of all God's mercies. He is delivered from that pride of heart which

once had the dominion over him, and is now of an humble spirit.

This sorrow which constitutes the very essence of true Repentance, is excited by a believing discovery of the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ for our sins. In his sufferings and death, the malignity of sin is discovered. Here may be seen how provoking our offences must have been to the Most High. To expiate our sins, the Son of God clothed himself in mortal flesh, submitted to the deepest poverty, was exposed to shame and reproach, agonized in the garden, stood speechless and condemned at Pilate's bar, was nailed to the ignominious cross, and there expired.

"Alas!" says the penitent sinner, "the sorrows of the spotless Lamb of God were occasioned by my crimes, and endured for my sake. For my sins he was delivered into the hands of cruel men; and drank the bitter cup of wo. My transgressions oppressed his holy soul, and made it sorrowful even to death. My offences brought down the Lord of glory with shame and anguish to the grave. For me he was pierced with the thorns, with the nails, with the spear, and, what was more than all, with the awful sword of justice, which was called to awake against him in all its flaming terrors. Can I think of this and not be affected? Shall I not shed tears of penitence for my sins, when I see Jesus shedding his precious blood to wash them away? Glorious sufferer! Shall I be more sparing of my tears than thou wast of thy blood?"

The love of Jesus, manifested in his death, melts the heart into true Repentance. He loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood. O affecting consideration! While we look to his cross, and contemplate the love of Him who hung upon it, our godly sorrow may well be excited, and the tears of penitence freely flow.

The consideration of the benefits which we derive from the Redeemer's death will, through grace, promote the happy temper of mind we are describing; when oppressed with a sense of the greatness and grievousness of our sins, we are enabled by faith, to behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world, and are encouraged to hope for full salvation through him. A view of pardoning mercy is most effectual to soften and

dissolve the heart into godly contrition. This induced the penitent Mary to weep at the Redeemer's feet; to wash them with her tears, and to wipe them with the hairs of her head. She had much forgiven, she loved much, and mourned much. This was not the sorrow of despair, like that of Judas; but a sorrow mixed with faith and hope. The view of relief and hope of mercy have a kindly influence on the mind, to open the springs of godly sorrow.

3. In true Repentance a man gives up all confidence in his own righteousness. He becomes dead to the law, as a covenant of works. His mouth is for ever stopped from making mention of his own righteousness, as the ground of his acceptance with God. The divine Redeemer is now the only object of his trust. He has no hope of peace with God, of justification before him, or of final happiness, except through Jesus Christ.

4. Repentance issues in a turning from sin to holiness in the life and conversation. It cannot be proved to be sincere without this. There are fruits meet for Repentance. If these are wanting, in vain do we profess to be the subjects of it. The repenting sinner forsakes that for which he grieves. Saul wept, Ahab chastened himself, Felix trembled, Judas repented, but none of them, so far as we know, brought forth fruits meet for Repentance.

As the true penitent confesses his sin to God with freedom and openness, so he forsakes it in practice. And whoso confesseth and forsaketh his sin shall have mercy.

We ought not to judge of the efficacy of our Repentance by such variable and uncertain tokens, as proceed more from the constitution of the body, than the disposition of the mind, or more from sudden passions and violent emotions, than from a fixed temper. Tears are often shed where there is little sorrow, and the deepest sorrow is sometimes experienced without any tears. He that feels no sorrow for sin, has reason to doubt of the sincerity of his Repentance; since he seems not to be truly sensible of the real evil there is in sin; but the highest degree of sorrow will not be a full proof of penitence, if the settled disposition of the mind be not changed, and if fruits meet for Repentance be not brought forth in the life and conversation. No degree of inward terrors of conscience, no pompous solemnities of external devotion,

can be substituted in the room of a practical conformity to the will of God, as an evidence of Repentance.

The newness of life connected with Repentance includes the forsaking of those sins of which we have formerly been guilty, and the practice of those duties which we have hitherto neglected.

Reparation should likewise be made, as far as our circumstances will allow, to those whom we have injured in the days of our impenitence.—We should use our best endeavours to undeceive any whom we have formerly seduced or misled. If we have deprived any man of his right we must take the first opportunity of restoring it to him. If we have injured any one's reputation, or aspersed his character, we ought, regardless of the shame and reproach to which we may be exposed, to take proper measures for counteracting the mischief we have done by our calumnies. Nothing should be omitted which can be done, to obviate the ill consequences of our past misconduct. Can we think that man's profession of Repentance to be sincere, who withholds what he has torn away from the lawful possessor by fraud, injustice, or extortion? Will his pretended zeal for religion, and his show of rapturous devotion, alter the great and invariable rules of reason and of justice; or give him a right to keep what he had no right to take away? Surely not. We see how Repentance wrought in Zaccheus, Luke xix. 8, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor: and if I have taken any thing from any man, by false accusations, I restore him fourfold." This is the way in which the grace of the gospel operates upon the heart of a true penitent.

Whatever have been the means of awakening us from the lethargy of sin, if our Repentance be sincere, the temper of our minds will be changed, and our hearts will be sound in God's statutes. We shall be able to say with the Psalmist, I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right, and I hate every false way. We shall abhor that which is evil, and because it is so. It will be the business of our lives to deny ourselves, and take up our cross, and follow Jesus. We shall mortify the deeds of the body through the powerful aid of the divine Spirit; we shall crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts; we shall strive against sin, and watch and pray

that we enter not into temptation. Our hearts will be inclined to God's testimonies, from a love to his name, a respect to his authority, and a desire for his glory,—that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed through any instance of misconduct in us. We shall be habitually concerned, that God, in all things, may be glorified by us; and that we may adorn his doctrine by bringing forth much fruit. All this is exemplified in the case of the royal penitent: "I thought on my ways, and turned my feet to thy testimonies. I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments."

Such is Repentance. It implies a total change of mind respecting that evil thing which only could make it necessary. It consists in godly sorrow for our manifold abominations in heart and life, connected with faith in the divine Redeemer, and hope of mercy through him. It includes an entire renunciation of all confidence in the flesh, and a looking for acceptance with God through the righteousness of Jesus Christ alone. And it issues in a turning from sin to holiness in the life and conversation.

And that surely must be of great importance, which constitutes a peculiar message from God to sinful men. The harbinger of the divine Saviour was a preacher of Repentance; and required those who came to be baptized of him, to bring forth fruits meet for Repentance. Jesus Christ himself came with this message from above, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. He saves his people, not *in* but *from* their sins. His language is, Except ye repent, ye shall all perish. He tells us, he came not to call the righteous, but sinners to Repentance. He commissioned his twelve apostles to preach the same doctrine. After the resurrection of Christ, they had their commission renewed; but it was still to the same effect, That Repentance and remission of sins should be preached in the name of Jesus, among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

After the ascension of Jesus, when the apostles were fully endued with power from on high, they set about their great work in this manner, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, saying, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins. Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." To such as were

known to be in the gall of bitterness, and bond of iniquity, their message was, Repent, and pray. They declared, that God now commanded all men every where to repent; because he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained.

The God of grace and mercy has never promised pardon to an impenitent sinner; nor have we any instance in the divine word, of forgiveness of sins without Repentance. The voice of mercy to guilty men is, Repent, that your sins may be blotted out. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the Lord, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. When Christ, the exalted Prince and Saviour, gives Repentance, he also gives the inseparable blessing of forgiveness of sins.

If Repentance be a thorough change of the mind from sin to holiness, attended with a corresponding change of the life and conversation, it must be absolutely necessary to final happiness in heaven. For without holiness no man shall see the Lord. It would be contrary to the wisdom, to the purity, to the truth, and even to the grace and mercy of the Most High, to bring an impenitent sinner to heaven. It would be contrary to his divine purpose of salvation; for that is, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. God has chosen us in him, that we should be holy. It would be contrary to his constant procedure. His constant procedure is, to grant Repentance unto life, to all those whom he brings to the possession of that life, as his own gift through Christ Jesus.

In a word, of such importance is Repentance towards God, that he is interested in the promises and grace of the gospel who possesses it, and he who does not is exposed to the tremendous wrath of a sin-avenging God.

PUBLISHED BY THE

BAPTIST GENERAL TRACT SOCIETY,

NO. 36, NORTH FIFTH STREET.

PHILADELPHIA.

him to proceed. He wept bitterly, labored to speak, but for a long time he was unable to do so. At length he told me that his mind had recently become impressed under a sermon he had heard; that he was a great sinner; that the impression was so deep, and had produced so much anxiety, that he was nearly unable to pursue the engagements or enjoy the comforts of life; and under these circumstances he wished to know what he should do. If ever I could form an idea of the happiness of heaven, it was at that moment. To see a young man thus snatched by the divine hand from the snares of the world and the power of Satan, and filled with grief that he had broken the holy law of a righteous God, and concerned to know more fully the way of salvation by Christ Jesus, was a sight over which, I doubt not, saints and angels in heaven rejoiced.

My task now was indeed pleasing. I had to show him that "God so loved the world as to give his beloved Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life;" that this Saviour died even for the chief of sinners; that he has invited the guiltiest to his throne, and declared that "whosoever cometh unto Him, he will in no wise cast them out" from his presence. Oh, with what readiness did he listen to the statement; how did he admire the display of infinite wisdom and love in the scriptural method of salvation, which so entirely provides for the honor of the divine government, and the full and eternal happiness of the sinner, without money and without price; and how earnestly did he appear to join in the prayer we then presented to God for pardon and mercy!

This earnest desire for the enjoyment of divine favor was not permitted to wear away; it was not long before he was enabled entirely to trust in the Saviour, and to rejoice in the bestowment of his love. He has since been enabled to glorify God by a conduct becoming the gospel, and is ever ready to testify of the service of Jesus, that its "ways are ways of pleasantness, and its paths are paths of peace."

YE MUST BE BORN AGAIN. John iii. 7.

1 Awak'd by Sinai's awful sound,
My soul in bonds of guilt I found,
And knew not where to go;
O'erwhelm'd with sin, with anguish slain,
The sinner must be BORN AGAIN,
Or sink to endless wo.

2 Amaz'd I stood, but could not tell
Which way to shun the gates of hell,
For death and hell drew near;
I strove indeed, but strove in vain,
The sinner must be BORN AGAIN,
Still sounded in mine ear.

3 When to the law I trembling fled,
It pour'd its curses on my head,
I no relief could find;
This fearful truth increas'd my pain,
The sinner must be BORN AGAIN,
O'erwhelm'd my tortur'd mind.

4 Again did Sinai's thunders roll,
And guilt lay heavy on my soul,
A vast unwieldy load;
Alas! I read and saw it plain,
The sinner must be BORN AGAIN,
Or drink the wrath of God.

5 The saints I heard with rapture tell,
How Jesus conquer'd death and hell,
And broke the fowler's snare.
Yet, when I found this truth remain,
The sinner must be BORN AGAIN,
I sunk in deep despair.

6 But while I thus in anguish lay,
Jesus of Naz'reth pass'd that way,
And felt his pity move;
The sinner, by his justice slain,
Now, by his grace, is BORN AGAIN,
And sings redeeming love.

7 To heav'n the joyful tidings flew,
The angels tun'd their harps anew,
And loftier notes did raise;
All hail! the Lamb who once was slain,
Unnumber'd millions, BORN AGAIN,
Will shout thine endless praise.

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